

Health and Wellbeing

Keeping Up Appearances

Victoria Farrand watches as Leeds Guide girls Erin and Holly are put to Equilibrium's fitness test

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Erin Coull



Holly O'Neil



Erin Coull and Holly O'Neil may look like two healthy, young twenty-something women to the undiscerning eye, but what lies beneath? Erin smokes and doesn't worry about what she eats, Holly is a bit of a health freak. Time to face personal trainer Jon Wray and his team at Equilibrium Health.

First, both girls were put through their paces and tested in every aspect of health and fitness, from their resting heart rate, to Body Mass Index, to cholesterol levels. Jon explained that all the results "are evidence based and highlight the risk of developing a metabolic

disease, such as chronic heart disease (CHD) and type 2 diabetes in later life. He says that conclusions can be made about their physical fitness, and from there, the possible need for exercise prescription.

After the non-medical health assessment it was clear that the two could not be more different. As a keen runner Holly tackles at least 15 miles per week, walks to and from work and has a healthy diet. On the opposite side of the coin, Erin cannot remember the last time she exercised, enjoys a considerably less than healthy diet and smokes an average of 10 cigarettes a day. Holly had a resting heart rate of just 68bpm, a blood pressure of 120/80, a body fat percentage of 21, and a cholesterol level of 4.7; putting Holly in the 'low risk' category and giving her an astonishing overall metabolic age — that of a 12 year old.

Erin also had low cholesterol and blood pressure; all good news, but this could simply be as a result of her age. Being young could mean that the long term damage of her lifestyle is not yet visible in her blood. Other contributory factors show that the lack of exercise and bad diet are definitely affecting her body in a detrimental way. Erin's body fat percentage was 31.9, classing her as 'over-fat', even though she doesn't look it at all, and her high salt intake placed the water content of her body as 'below average'. Erin's waist

measurement was in the lower end of the 'border line risk' category for developing Type 2 diabetes — nothing to be overly alarmed about, but she now knows that visceral fat around the stomach is a high risk factor for developing the disease.

All these factors have contributed to Erin's untimely metabolic age of 33 years old. Erin says that she never realised how badly she was treating her body. "I knew I wasn't particularly healthy but I didn't realise that you don't have to look fat to be fat. I'll definitely change how I treat myself, the results were extremely upsetting but I am really glad I have found out now before it's too late!" Holly was very proud with her results, and just a little bit smug. "I feel really chuffed with the results — all my hard work like running has paid off. It's just the motivation I needed to keep me going towards my goal of the 2009 NYC marathon."

Jon's general perception of fitness in Leeds is that "there is an obvious lack of physical activity amongst the general public." For example, he was in the Light the other day, "and the place was really busy, and people were squashed on the escalators but there stairs were completely empty".

The recommended levels of physical activity a week are; three periods of moderate to vigorous exercise, and five periods of light to moderate exercise.



There is good news for women as oestrogen is a natural protector against coronary heart disease.

For people who lead hectic family and work lives, Jon recommends small but effective lifestyle changes such as cycling or walking to work, as it plays an important part in reducing blood pressure.

For more information and to book a fitness and health appraisal visit Equilibrium Health Personal Fitness and Pilates, Cathedral Chambers, Great George Street, LS2 8BD, 0113 2449 1231, www.equilibrium-health.co.uk